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# IRELAND'S APOSTLE

AND

## FAITH.

BY

THE REV. FATHER O'HAIRE,

*LATE OF SOUTH AFRICA,*

Author of

"MAHOMET AND MAHOMETANISM,"

"THE TEMPORAL POWER OF THE POPE,"

"MONASTICISM,"

"VERY REV. T. MATHEW AND THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE,"

"GENERAL COUNCILS AND SUPREME PONTIFFS,"

"WHEN AND HOW SHALL THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PERISH?"

"TWELVE YEARS IN SOUTH AFRICA."

**Seventh Edition.**

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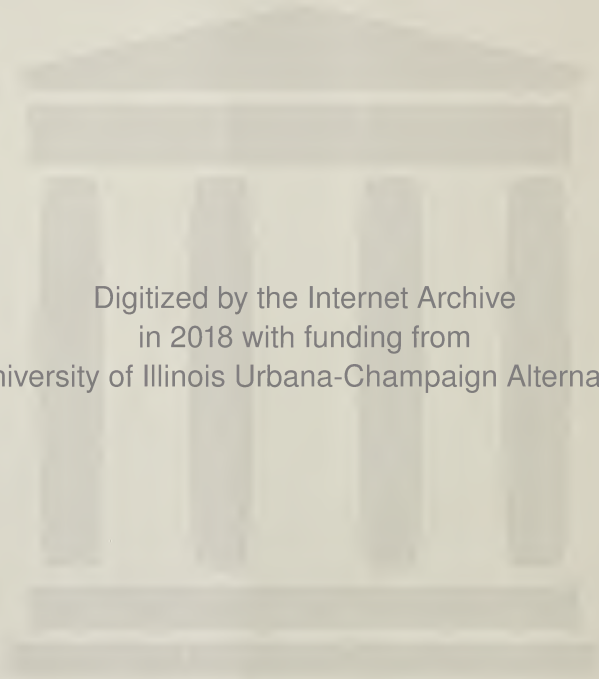
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## DISCOURSE THE FIRST.

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THE names of popes and historians, philosophers and warriors, who have rendered material service to the world, are inscribed on parchment, stone, and steel. The characters of men of great worldly wisdom are presented as models for our imitation ; whilst public gardens, galleries, and museums contain the statues and portraits of distinguished individuals, as a mark of the deep appreciation and respect which the children of this world entertain for the *illustrious* dead.

Now, if Alexander is lauded for martial exploits, Demosthenes and Cicero admired for fervid eloquence, Homer and Virgil praised for their heroic poetry, Aristotle and Pythagoras for astronomical research—and if the literary qualifications and natural virtues or merits of a long succession of pagans are found worthy the attention of Christian scholars, then, surely, the practice of the Catholic Church in reference to the saints ought to meet with the approbation of intelligent men.

Every logical mind will readily admit that, as heaven is above earth, and as God is superior to man, so those who have distinguished themselves in the cause of heaven and of God are more deserving of our admiration than those whose pursuits have been merely human. The saints have been eminent for their holiness ; they have studied the science of the heaven of heavens, of the kingdom of

God. Their lives have glorified God and edified men ; they have laboured to elevate man to a sense of his real dignity, to a knowledge of his ultimate and supernatural end. The saints had for their whole aim to educate man in the school of Christ, and by this education to bring him to the possession of never-ending felicity ; hence the saints are worthy objects of gratitude and veneration.

The Catholic Church, in proposing for our edification the lives of her canonised children, carries into effect the advice contained in the 44th chapter of Ecclesiasticus :— “ Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation . . . these men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed : good things continue with their seed. Their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their seed hath stood in the covenants ; and their children for their sakes remain for ever : their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken. Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the Church declare their praise.” One of the great duties of God’s Church, to which she has ever been most faithful, is the celebration of the festivals of her saints. From end to end of the year the Church’s saints are the theme of her daily thanksgiving and praise. They are her heroes, and therefore she honours them ; just as the world celebrates its own heroes, records their great deeds, and builds up monuments to perpetuate their names and their glory. The saints were the living and most faithful representatives of Christ our Lord, of his virtues, his love, his actions, his power, so that he lived in them, and wrought in them and through them the redemption of men.

On this day we celebrate the Festival of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland. To the life, therefore, of this great saint, I propose to direct your attention. I shall after-



wards bring before you the invincible fortitude of the Irish people in preserving that faith, of which St. Patrick was the apostle.

Numerous and elaborate are the discussions in which biographers and historians have engaged as to the exact time and place of the birth of our apostle. Without entering, however, into the controversy, I will at once state what seems to me the most probable opinion, namely, that St. Patrick, son of Calphurnius and Conchessa, was born in 387, at Boulogne-sur-mer, in Armoric Gaul. Of the details of his early life little reliable information can now be obtained; nor does there seem to have been anything peculiarly interesting in his career prior to his sixteenth year, at which age he, with some of his father's servants, was (in 403) carried captive into Ireland. As the Patriarch Joseph was sold by his brethren into Egyptian bondage, and subsequently played a wonderful part in the drama of Divine Providence, so Patrick began his career as a slave amongst a people who afterwards, under his holy direction, burst asunder the shackles of paganism, and were by him introduced into the only true and glorious liberty of the children of God. Brought to Ireland, he was, according to custom, publicly sold, his purchaser being Milcho, an Irish chief of the county Antrim. This man the youthful Patrick served as a shepherd for the space of six years, enduring cold and want while tending his master's flocks on the mountain; and, at the same time, devoting himself to incessant prayer. Upon that shivering boy, the angels of heaven smiled; and though a weak, poor, and abandoned captive, he was yet destined by the Almighty, whose power is made perfect in infirmity, to lead the Irish nation to the knowledge and worship of the true God. Thus, the slave Patrick, inured to hardship,

and accustomed to lead Milcho's sheep to good pasture was, in after-life, enabled to bear the privations of his mission, while he fed thousands of souls with the bread which came down from heaven. One cannot fail to observe the similarity between the commencement and the end of his career. He began as a shepherd, and ended by carrying out, in its most touching, spiritual sense, the injunction of the Saviour of man: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." In the economy of God's providence it was admirably arranged that Patrick, the future apostle of the Irish people, should be brought to Ireland to acquire an essential element of his future apostleship—the language of the people.

The biographers of the saint tell us that during his captivity he acquired an extraordinary spirit of prayer, every day and every night bending his knee one hundred times in adoration before God, and praying for the gift of divine love. Thus it was that his pure, innocent soul, expanding under the warmth of heavenly grace, attracted the richest gifts of Heaven, so that his unsullied heart, saturated with the choicest favours of God, was made suitable soil for the cultivation of those ecclesiastical and apostolic virtues which were afterwards the support of his missionary life. I must not omit to state that during his bondage the Saint had one source of poignant grief, which entered also into his entire life, viz., that in his early days, before his captivity, his knowledge of God was slight, and his love proportionally limited. In his holy meditations on the hills of Antrim, his mind became illuminated. In his reflections he beheld the excellencies of the God he worshipped; the more he prayed for knowledge, the more enlightened he became; in the school of holy solitude, with his invisible Creator as teacher, he saw more clearly



each day the exquisite beauty of God; the more he knew God the more he loved Him, till at length his soul, ravished with divine affection, had but one regret—that of having commenced so late to love God.

In this manner he passed six years; and at the end of this period (about 409), being then twenty-two years of age, he had a remarkable dream or vision, in which he saw a ship off the coast, waiting to convey him to his own country. On awaking, he at once resolved to proceed to the coast, a distance of about 200 Roman miles. After many privations and difficulties, he at length arrived at the coast, and to his delight found, indeed, a ship; but on applying for a passage, the sailors, seeing that he was without the means of defraying the necessary expenses, scoffed him.

Thus God, trying the Saint's patience, for a while permitted his holy servant to be disappointed. With regret, but with resignation, he retraced his steps towards the dreary Antrim hills, yet had not proceeded so far, when the sailors, though pagans, touched by his peculiar modesty, and, no doubt, moved thereto by God's grace, called Patrick back, and consented to give him a passage free. After three days this ship conveyed St. Patrick to Scotland, where he landed with the sailors, and they continued to wander about for the space of twenty-five days in fruitless search of a habitation. Their stock of provisions being exhausted, and finding nothing eatable in the trackless waste, they were in danger of perishing, when, knowing St. Patrick to be a Christian, they asked how it happened he did not ask his God to send him food. The youthful Saint seized upon this favourable opportunity of enlisting the sympathies of these poor pagans in favour of the true God, and said: "If you will join with me in

praying for food, you will see that the good God will send it." Whereupon they all knelt, and joined in the prayer of Patrick. Immediately a large number of swine appeared, and from that day to the end of their journey they were never in want.

Very few authentic details are preserved of the events of the life of St. Patrick from his return home until he placed himself under the direction of St. Martin of Tours, and prosecuted his studies with ability and zeal in the Monastery of Noirmoutiers. In the year 417, when in his thirtieth year, he had a second remarkable dream, in which an Irishman, by name Victorinus, appeared to him with a letter headed with the words, "The voice of the Irish people;" while underneath were inscribed the words, "Come, holy youth, and walk amongst us," From this moment his soul became inflamed with a burning desire of gaining the Irish people to God.

From under the holy direction of St. Martin of Tours he passed to that of St. Germaine of Auxerre; and in 418, probably with the joint advice of St. Martin and St. Germaine, he went to the island of Lerins, then famous for piety and learning. By some it is stated that from his thirty-ninth year, that is from 427, he lived under the immediate guidance of St. Germaine, studying sacred and profane literature, and practising the virtues necessary for the due discharge of ecclesiastical functions.

In 429 the errors of the Pelagian heresy were gaining ground in England, to the detriment of the true faith, and hence the Pope, the ever-watchful Pastor of the whole Christian flock, sent St. Germaine to England for the suppression of the false doctrines; as his associate in this important mission he took St. Patrick, who was then in his forty-first year.

After their return, in the year 431, St. Germaine sent St. Patrick to Rome, accompanied by a priest named Segetius, who was commissioned to recommend St. Patrick to the Pope for the work of evangelising the Irish nation. The project received the approbation and benediction of the Holy Father. Subsequently St. Patrick was ordained in his forty-fourth year, by Amato of Ebovia, A.D. 432, and shortly after received episcopal consecration at the hands of Amandus of Bordeaux.

About three days elapsed after the consecration of St. Patrick when Pope Celestine died, and Pope Sixtus III. was raised to the chair of Blessed Peter. About the same time passed into eternity Palladius, whom Pope Celestine had previously sent to preach the Gospel to the Irish people. Palladius died in Ireland. His mission, however, to the Irish does not appear to have been crowned with success. It would seem that it was a work set apart with efficacious graces for St. Patrick.

It cannot be deemed impertinent in this place to observe that, by the light of the history of the Christian religion, it is evident that Rome has ever been the recognised centre of authority. Our Divine Redeemer, viewed as man, was not self-commissioned ; for He Himself says : “ As the Father *sent* me, so I *send* you.” So that Jesus was *sent*, but not with a *Royal Patent* : for He also says : “ My Kingdom is not of *this world*.” The Apostles were *sent* ; for Jesus *sent* them, saying, “ Go, therefore, teach all nations ;” and afterwards St. Paul affirms that “ No man can preach unless he be *sent*.” Whoever, then, will take the trouble to read Church history will see that to Rome, and to Rome only, the world looked for pure Gospel-truth ; so that if any man dared to preach without the authority of the head—Rome—he was viewed as a counterfeit.

In the *Book of Armagh* which is attributed to St. Patrick (vol. ix.), the following testimony is found of his devoted attachment to the Holy See.

*“ Ut Christiani ita et Romani sitis.”*—“ As you are children of Christ, so be ye children of Rome.”

Saint Patrick taught our fathers, with truth, that the soul, the life, the heart, the conscience, and the head of the Church is Jesus Christ, and that his representative on earth, to whom He has communicated His graces and powers, is the Pope of Rome, the visible head of God's Church, the bishop of bishops, the centre of unity and of doctrine, the rock and the corner-stone on which the edifice of the Church is founded and built up. All this he pointed out in the Scriptures from the words of our Lord to Peter. Peter was the shepherd of the fold whose duty it was to “ feed both lambs and sheep ” with “ every word that cometh from the mouth of God.” Peter was the rock to sustain and uphold the Church. “ Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,” words which are the very touchstone of faith in these days of tribulation. Peter's was the strong, unerring voice which was ever to be heard in the Church defining her doctrines, warning off enemies, denouncing errors, rebuking sinners, guiding the doubtful, strengthening the weak, confirming the strong ; and Jesus said : “ Thou, Peter, confirm thy brethren.” St. Patrick taught the Irish people not to be scandalised if they saw the cross upon Peter's shoulders, and the crown of thorns upon his head, for so Christ lives in his Church and in her supreme Pastor ; he taught them that whoever strikes Peter strikes the Lord ; that whoever separates from Peter separates from Christ. Thus it was that Ireland's Apostle bound the Irish nation to the rock of ages ; to Peter's chair with firmest bonds of faith, obedience,

and love, and infused into their souls that supernatural instinct which for 1,400 years has kept Ireland faithful and loyal to the Holy See of Rome.

The author of a work entitled "The Church and the People," in reference to the attachment of the Irish nation to Peter's chair, says (page 22):—Yet, when the time of trial came, Ireland gathered up her weakened energies. The justice which has been refused to right was offered as a bribe; three hundred years of warfare struck her with sterility, and made her soil one huge churchyard; the dungeons were filled, and the scaffolds bowed by her offspring. She was barbarised by ignorance, and despoiled by confiscation. Religion itself depended upon a ministry that had been born amid strife and conflagration—begged an education from the charity of the Continent—and came home to meet martyrdom. But still the spirit of unity was not subdued. Nay, when the phrase which heresy always exhibits, falsely called "the march of intellect," at length reached her, bruised, beggared, and barbarous—she possessed one thought, bright and true and pure as ever, "THE LOVE OF ROME."

There was a period in our history, it is true, when Ireland was falsely accused by her foes of want of fidelity to the centre of unity. But poor Ireland, when misrepresented at the throne of Peter, and reprehended in charity and love, though her eyes were filled with tears, only hung her head and still clung to Rome more fondly. And when frenzy and hate conspired to drag her thence, she shrieked with despairing energy, and cried to God and man that her broken heart would beat its last pulsation. She revolted, she writhed, she bled, and saw the hacked forms of her martyred children laid in their nameless graves, but she never yielded. God said, "Let there be light," and



when day broke upon the darkness there was Ireland still—the cross pressed to her bosom with one hand, while the other firmly grasped the *immortal* chair of Peter.

More than 1,400 years of the Catholic history of Ireland have now transpired, and we see her to-day everywhere as true and faithful to the principle of her Apostle—*ut Christiani ita et Romani sitis*—as she was in the beginning.

To return to the life of St. Patrick. In the year 432 our Apostle landed in Ireland, first in Bray, secondly in Skerries, finally in the county Down, where his mission really began.

Having landed with his companions, the Chief Dichó felt alarmed at the arrival of strangers, and, conceiving them to be pirates, gathered together a large body of men, who proceeded to meet, and, if necessary, repel them. Contrary to their expectations, they found, instead of pirates, men of God, who were coming to teach them the principles of true religion. Dichó invited them to his house, heard the faith explained, and, with his family, was baptised and received into the Christian Church. This was a brilliant success, the first ray of divine light penetrating into the Irish heart, and producing wonderful results. For the conversion of Milcho of Antrim, his former master, the heart of St. Patrick burned. He accordingly set out to seek him. Such was, however, not merely his obduracy, but his infatuation, that on hearing St. Patrick was coming, Milcho, in a fit of frenzy, set fire to his house and was himself consumed to ashes in its ruins, thus showing of what perversity man's heart is capable. God's grace was not wanting: a vocation to the Christian faith was given, but co-operation was refused.

In the Paschal time of A.D. 433, St. Patrick set out for Tara. On his way he received into the Church Benignus,



a young pagan of great amiability, who thenceforth travelled with our Saint, and was subsequently consecrated successor to St. Patrick, as Bishop of Armagh.

On Easter eve St. Patrick stood at the foot of Tara's hill. It was customary with the Druid priests, according to religious rite, to light a fire on this day on Tara's mound in the presence of all the chiefs and princes of the kingdom, and the people were strictly prohibited from using fire until after the light should be perceived on Tara. St. Patrick, knowing that it is better to obey God than man, complied with the Catholic rite of lighting the Paschal fire. This excited the attention of the pagan chiefs and priests, who summoned the violators of the law before them. Patrick and his companions appeared in presence of the chiefs, the priests, and their surrounding suites. The king ordered that no one should rise to salute the intruders on their approach. One, however, Erc, son of Digo, unmindful of the order given, and enchanted by the appearance of the Christians, rose and saluted St. Patrick. This Erc was eventually converted, and became first Bishop of Slane. The Christian religion was explained by the Saint, and the chief ordered St. Patrick to appear again next morning to expound more fully the object of his mission. In the meantime, Leogaire, the king, is said to have laid a deep plot for the assassination of the Saint, which, however, proved unsuccessful; and when Sunday morning arrived, St. Patrick, robed in canonicals, and carrying his crozier—called the STAFF OF JESUS—proceeded to the Palace of Tara, accompanied by his priests and some disciples. The meeting was one of great state and solemnity. The king and queen, surrounded by chieftains and nobles of every rank, awaited in stern majesty the Saint's appearance. Orders had been issued that no

one should rise to salute the prelate. It is, however, affirmed that on this, as on other occasions, there was found one to do honour to the Saint. This was Dubtach, an eminent poet, who became a convert to the faith, and thenceforward devoted his talents to the cause of religion. There is a legend which states that St. Patrick, in explaining the Trinity before the multitude on Tara, used the shamrock to illustrate the Three Persons of the Godhead, or the mystery of the Trinity. Whether this did or did not take place, I cannot affirm; but the old tradition is certainly handed down in Ireland from father to son with devotional tenacity. The instruction of the Saint was listened to with fair attention, making all allowance for a pagan auditory. At the close the king gave the Apostle leave to preach, on two conditions: 1st, that he would not upset kingly authority; and, secondly, that he would not disturb the peace. St. Patrick assured him that the nature of the Catholic religion was such as to give honour to whom it was due, and to impart to men peace and goodwill. This concession of King Leogaire must be viewed as a great gain; for, had Leogaire opposed St. Patrick, the conversion of the people would no doubt have been retarded; but the conditions were easy, and St. Patrick was at least free to announce the name and religion of Christ wherever he pleased.

The conversion of Ireland from the time of St. Patrick's landing to the day of his death, is, in many respects, the strangest fact in the history of the Church. The saint met with no opposition; his career resembles more the triumphant progress of a king than the difficult labour of a missionary. The Gospel—with its lessons of self-denial, of prayer, of purity, in a word, of the violence which seizes on heaven, is not congenial to fallen man. His

pride, his passions, his blindness of intellect and hardness of heart, all oppose the spread of the Gospel ; so that the very fact that mankind has so universally accepted it, is adduced as a proof that it must be from God. The work of the Catholic missionary has, therefore, ever been, and must continue to be, a work of great labour, with apparently small results. Such has it ever been amongst all the nations ; and yet Ireland seems a grand exception. She is, perhaps, the only country in the world that entirely owes her conversion to one man. He found her universally pagan ; he left her universally Christian. She is also the only nation that never cost her Apostle an hour of sorrow, a single tear, a drop of blood.

Having alluded to the crosier, or staff of Jesus, as it had been named, it will not be considered out of place to make an historical allusion to it here. After the death of the Apostle, the staff was kept in veneration by the Irish people, and deposited (with other relics of great antiquity and note) in Christ Church, Dublin. Ware's Annals, however, inform us that George Brown, the first Reformed Bishop of Dublin, on his arrival, caused the staff of Jesus to be publicly burnt in a street called Christ Church-place where a bonfire was lighted to consume a large number of relics, which had resisted the ravages of time, and had been objects of pious esteem to our Catholic ancestors.

After the memorable Easter Sunday's sermon on Tara's hill, the Saint proceeded, with greater earnestness than ever, to establish the reign of Jesus throughout Ireland. He travelled to Meath, thence to Westmeath. In both places his success was marvellous : thousands embraced the Christian faith. He founded churches, and remained sufficiently long in each place to consolidate his work. He prepared persons of singular aptitude and piety for the

ecclesiastical state, and having ordained them, committed the new congregations to their care. In Westmeath he is said to have met with considerable opposition from a relative of the king, named Fergus. It was here, at the hill of Usneagh, that he received a remarkable convert, named Euda. About 435 he set out for Connaught. Here his success was wonderful: he received, it is stated, about 12,000 converts, including the king and his seven sons.

Among the many distinguished converts, special mention is made of two daughters of King Leogaire, whose conversion happened thus: St. Patrick and some priests were chanting their office near a fountain situated a short distance from the royal residence. The princesses (who chanced to be near the spot) were astonished at the appearance of the strangers, and asked if they belonged to earth or to heaven. St. Patrick explained to them his mission. They asked: "Where does God live? Is He rich? Is He young? Has He sons or daughters, and are they handsome?" These questions elicited explanations sufficient to induce them to embrace the faith, and to desire to see Jesus Christ as soon as possible. Thereupon the Saint explained the dogma of the Eucharist, which they subsequently received, and, as it is also stated, dedicated themselves to the exclusive service of God, and received the religious veil from the hands of St. Patrick.

In 442, St. Patrick, having spent nearly seven years in Connaught, achieving prodigious conquests for the kingdom of God, directed his steps towards Ulster, where his preaching was eminently successful. Amongst the many distinguished converts who were received in that province, special mention may be made of the daughter of the Chief Echodius, named Cinnie, who devoted herself to a life of



virginity. Another chief, named Owen, embraced the faith, and his example was followed by all his subjects. Many churches were founded, several convents established, and numbers of priests ordained. Passing from Ulster into Leinster, he went to Naas, where he baptised two princes, Illand and Allild, sons of King Dunlung. It is scarcely necessary to observe that the example of persons of position, such as chieftains and princes, has a powerful effect upon the people. The old adage, *Verba movent sed exempla trahunt* ("Words move, but example draws"), has always been verified. Advice is feeble in its effects when compared with the splendid result of example; for, while words of good advice may touch the heart, may induce *conviction*, may captivate the understanding, yet example must generally be added, that *persuasion* may follow. By *doing*, we morally force men to adopt what words might never bring into action.

From Kildare he went to Carlow, visiting on his way Leix, now part of Queen's County. Here a plot was laid to entrap the Saint and his companions in a pit; but God was again graciously pleased to make known the snare to the Saint, through a holy lady named Briga. During this visit he ordained a convert named Fiech, who subsequently became first bishop in Leinster.

An event of great importance in the life of St. Patrick is the foundation of the See of Armagh, which is the Seat of Primacy even to this day; the date of its establishment is stated by the Bollandists to have been 454. Our Saint, having governed this see for several years, was succeeded by his disciple, Benignus.

We now come to the close of the life of this Confessor of Christ; but before we speak of his holy death, let us

glance for another moment at his wonderful labours, and still more extraordinary success.

The number of pagans baptized by him comprised almost an entire nation; he consecrated many bishops, and founded episcopal sees. It is stated by some that he ordained no less than 3,000 priests, and placed them over the island in care of souls. He founded 700 religious houses, and built 300 churches.

How wonderful, brethren, is God's power, which raises the little things of this world to confound the great, and employs the most abject and humble instruments to carry out his designs! Thus the slave of Milcho is, in the adorable economy of God, chosen to raise up the Irish nation from spiritual bondage, and summon thousands of pagans from the darkness of heathenism to the light of Christianity.

The last illness of this illustrious Confessor of our dear Lord happened at a place called Saul. The Holy Viaticum he received at the hands of the Bishop of Tassach. According to the Bollandists, he died on the 17th of March, 465, at the age of 78, having laboured in the conversion of Ireland for thirty-three years. When the news of the Saint's death spread through the island, the clergy flocked in crowds to celebrate the obsequies. It is recorded that the celebration of Masses, chanting of psalms, and general religious celebrations were continued for several days; and that the entire ceremonial was conducted with great solemnity and pomp. Such was the number of blazing torches that the day could scarcely be distinguished from the night, as the atmosphere was one sheet, as it were, of burning light. The remains of the Apostle were interred in the county Down. Thus ended the life of Ireland's Apostle. Thus, brethren, our pagan forefathers were



introduced to the participation of the faith of Christ by the great St. Patrick.

And from that time, under the blessing of the Redeemer, and through the intercession of our national Apostle, the virgin Church of Ireland, unstained even by one martyr's blood, became the prolific mother of saints. The Irish Church knew no childhood, no ages of painful and uncertain struggle, to get used to Christian practices and establish Christian traditions. Like the children in the early ages of the Church, who were confirmed in infancy, immediately after baptism, Ireland was called upon, as soon as converted, to become at once the mother of saints, the home and refuge of learning, the great instructress of the nations; and, perhaps, the history of the world does not exhibit a more striking or glorious sight than Ireland for the 300 years immediately following her conversion to the Catholic faith. The whole island was covered with schools and monasteries, in which men, the most renowned of their age both for learning and sanctity, received thousands of scholars, who flocked from every land. Whole cities were given up to them. To the students the evening star gave the signal for retirement, and the morning star for awkaing. "When at the sound of the early bell," says the historian, "thousands of them poured into the silent streets, and made their way towards the lighted church, to join in the service of matins, mingling, as they went or returned, the tongues of the Gael, the Cimbri, the Pict, the Saxon, and the Frank, or hailing and answering each other in the universal language of the Roman Church, the angels of heaven must have loved to contemplate the union of so much perseverance with so much piety. The nations, beholding and admiring the lustre of learning and sanctity which shone forth in the holy isle,

united in conferring upon Ireland the proudest title ever yet given to a land or a people, the 'Island of Saints and of Doctors.' ”

In my own name, and in yours, brethren, I give thanks to God, that Ireland has held her faith with such unparalleled fidelity. Whatever may have been her glory, whatever her truth, whatever her errors, whatever her persecutions, whatever her poverty, she has always held her religion with a tenacity which has outlived everything she possessed ; her independence, her nationality, her institutions, her customs, her laws, her manners, her schools, her colleges, her whole material resources, have been ruthlessly seized, or have been swept away ; but above the ashes of them all has survived, in undiminished glory and untarnished splendour, the pearl of great price—her faith!

War has swept over her fields and famine filled her graveyards ; the scaffolds have drunk the blood of her children ; their bones have bleached in the depths of the ocean and the desert. Her sons have bled, have been beggared and exiled, until power despaired, and policy fled confused, before the miraculous firmness of the Catholic faith in the Irish heart ; but never, never have the enemies of Catholicity seen Ireland kneel in the conventicle of heresy ; never have they seen her prelates deny their parentage ; never have they beheld her children blush at the recollection of her martyrs : and so shall it be to the end. Ireland, dear Ireland, land of my birth ; Ireland, faithful child of Rome ; Ireland, land of confessors, virgins, and martyrs, you will persevere, holding with a firm grasp, even to the end of time, the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic faith !

## DISCOURSE THE SECOND.

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HAVING thus far glanced at the life of our Irish Apostle, and brought before you the leading events of his career, I will now ask you to take, with me, a view of the unflinching fidelity to Catholicity and to Rome of the nation to which St. Patrick so successfully preached the Gospel of Truth. In doing so, I disclaim all idea of entering the arena of politics. I am not here as a politician. I present myself as a Catholic, and as such, brethren, my heart swells with affection, and my soul expands in loving gratitude as I address you to-day, with the name of St. Patrick on my lips. My feelings of religious patriotism are aroused and warmed, and my tenderest sympathies are awakened, as my mind takes a retrospective view of the history of the country of which St. Patrick was the Apostle. The powers of my soul are uplifted, and the pulsations of my heart are quickened as I appear in your presence, children of *Catholic Ireland*, the descendants of a people, religious and ardent, monastic and warlike, missionary and civilising, and, when faith demanded that grand testimony of their love, a nation of martyrs.

In order to fraternise with Irishmen, and to espouse the cause of Ireland, it is not necessary to have been born on Erin's soil; it is enough to have studied the *real* character

of the Irish people, and to have made oneself acquainted with the history of Catholic Ireland.

It matters not at what period, or under what circumstances, the Catholic Church in Ireland may be contemplated—let it be viewed, through a dispassionate medium, either in its origin or in its progress, during the revolution of ages, and it will be found to contain materials of the highest importance to religion, and worthy of being embalmed in the eternal recollection of Irishmen and of Catholics. The ancient fathers, by whom this sacred edifice was raised, have an undoubted claim to the gratitude of posterity. By their apostolic virtues they have won for their country a name which shall ever be cherished, and of which no other nation can boast—that of an *Island of Saints*. By their persevering industry they have caused the Church of Ireland to spread and to strengthen, and to bid defiance to the wreck of time; but above all, they have transmitted it to their children as a depository of that faith which, in itself, is the most precious of bequests, and which no ingenuity or power of man has been able to wrest from them.

It is not, however, in the origin so much as in the triumphant progress of this Church, that its history becomes interesting. Centuries have rolled on; the works of man, after flourishing for a time, decay and disappear, but this supernatural work has continued as fair and vigorous as ever. The Church of Ireland, it is true, has had seasons of serenity, but it was also doomed to endure the tempest, and has passed through an ordeal of trial and persecution, unparalleled in the history of mankind. During these awful periods the priesthood of Ireland, like the primitive martyrs, have been tried in the crucible, thousands of them sealed their faith with their blood, others confirmed it by

exile ; and while death stalked in the sanctuary and desolation spread around, they nobly secured the ancient religion of the country, and handed it down unchanged to succeeding generations.

I fear not to assert that Ireland and Irishmen have stamped their names on the historic records of every civilised land ; that Ireland's sons have infused their blood into the veins of the most valiant nations ; have established their bravery in the warlike annals of the world ; have for centuries penetrated into almost every country on earth carrying with them the light of civilisation and the pearl of Christianity. In proof of whatever I may assert I will bring forward the united testimonies of a host of famous historians.

His Eminence Cardinal (then Very Rev. Father) Newman, writing to the *Catholic University Gazette* of June 15th, 1854, says :—" Green Erin is a land ancient, and yet young ; ancient in her Christianity, young in her hopes of the future. A nation which received grace before yet the Saxon had set his foot upon the soil of England, and which has never suffered the sacred flame to be extinguished in her heart ; a Church which comprises within its historic period the birth and fall of Canterbury and York, which Augustine and Paulinus found at their coming, and which Pole and Fisher left behind them."

The late illustrious Dupanloup, a French bishop, a remarkable scholar, speaking in the Church of St. Roch, Paris, 25th March, 1861, said :—" Truly, the nations of Europe, and humanity itself, have just reason to be proud of the Irish race. I know no people around whom their patriotism, their pure morals, their courageous faith, their unconquerable fidelity, their bravery, their ardour (whose mission is conquest and civilisation), their disinterested-



ness, their patient endurance of wrong, their poetry, their eloquence, and all those noble qualities—ever elevated, never cast down, exalted and crowned by misfortune—have thrown a halo more captivating and more sorrowful.”

Again he says:—“Irishmen have braved the storms of the sea; evangelised the Hebrides, the Highlands of Scotland, and Northumberland; soon we see them in Neustria, in Flanders, amongst the Austrians, the Helvetians, the Rhætians, in the two Burgundies. They cross the Rhine; they pitch their tents in Allemania, Bavaria, all Germany to the south of the Danube; they penetrate into Spain, and are met with even in the extremity of Italy and the Magna Græcia. Where is it that we do not trace their steps?” And further, describing the *mission* of the Irish people, he says:—“It was to preach the Gospel to the infidel; to reanimate Christians crushed under barbarian invasions; to arouse to nobleness degenerate souls; to raise up powerful races; to rekindle the extinguishing torch of arts and of letters; to carry everywhere the light of science and of faith.” (See English Translation of Sermon.)

But it was not by mere secular knowledge, not by mere worldly learning, not by mere natural or human philosophy that we conquered. No! we ever held a weapon, which has stood the test in our hands: that weapon is our faith: we held it not merely in peace and calm, but in the din of war, and smoke of battle. We held it, not only when men smiled upon us, but when the world frowned upon us. We clasped it tightly, and pressed it to our hearts, not only in the day of sunshine, but in the gloomiest hour, in the darkest night of Ireland’s afflictions. Religion may flourish in the halls of the universities, and be fairly illus-



trated in the lives of the Saints, yet there is one crown and that, indeed, the very countersign of faith—*Victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides*—which can only rest on the brows of a Church and a nation, which has been tried by persecution and war, and that crown is Victory. The bay-tree may flourish by the river side; the cedar may rear its majestic head on the mountain top; leaf and fair flower and the fulness of fruit may be there, but it is only in the dark hour, when the storm sweeps over the earth, and every weak thing yields to it, and is carried away by its fury, that the good tree is tested, and its strength is proved. Then men see whether it has struck its roots deep into the soil, and so twined them about the hidden rocks that no power can tear them out. The good ship may sail before the prosperous gales, and “walk upon the waters” in all her beauty and majesty; but it is only on the morning after the storm, when the hurricane has swept over the face of the deep, when the angry waves have beaten upon her and strained to its utmost her strength, seeking to destroy her, but in vain, that the sailor knows that he can trust to the heart of oak, and sleep securely in his noble vessel. Thus it has been with the Church of Ireland. Her beauty and her sanctity, her learning, her zeal, and her energy were admired by heaven and earth, by angels and by men. But her Lord was resolved that she should wear such a crown of victory as never before adorned a nation’s brow, and therefore she was submitted to persecution, which for duration and intensity has no parallel. She was cast down and trampled upon and crushed while her blood spurted from every vein. Her enemies strangled her body in the hope of wresting the faith from her firm grasp; but as St. John, in the pursuit of his enemies, flung away his garment and fled naked, so Ireland, in the day of her

trial, gave up everything that was external, but retained her faith without blemish; and her vanquished enemies exclaimed, in accents of bitterness and surprise, "Ireland holds her faith."

An eminent writer, referring to the period of Ireland's prolific monasticism and intellectual glory, affirms: "At the time the ruin and desolation of almost all the rest of the world took place. Rome was in flames; and the ancient pagan civilisation of thousands of years was gone. Hordes of barbarians poured in streams over the world. The whole of that formerly civilised world seemed to be falling back again into the darkness and chaos of the barbarism of the early times; but Ireland, sheltered by the encircling waves, converted and sanctified, kept her national freedom. No invader profaned her virgin soil; no sword was drawn, nor cry of battle nor feud resounded through the land; and the consequence was that Ireland, developing her schools, entering into every field of learning, produced in almost every monk a man fitted to teach his fellow-man, and to enlighten the world. And the whole world came to their monasteries; from every clime they filled the land, and for three hundred years history declares that Ireland held the intellectual supremacy of the world."

Brennen, in his "Ecclesiastical History," p. 222, affirms: "Public gratuitous education, aided by a priesthood, humble and disengaged from the world, was one of the principal ordinary means by which the conversion of Ireland had been effected; secondly, the same gratuitous education filled the monasteries with scholars, supplied the missions with an enlightened clergy, caused religion to appear in its loveliness, made its counsels to be embraced by multitudes, and transformed the country into a land of penitents and saints; thirdly, it created a high national

reputation for Ireland; it brought the distant stranger to our shores; it sent him home with a mind enlightened by knowledge, and a heart warmed with gratitude, and it elicited many a lofty and well-merited panegyric in favour of our country from some of the most distinguished writers of Europe; and, fourthly, it emboldened the Irish ecclesiastic to leave his native land, and to encounter the difficulties of a foreign mission: it made some of them the Apostles of nations, and others the revivers of literature. For these reasons it was that the ancient fathers of the Irish Church had been so very solicitous in upholding the nobler system of public gratuitous education. Hence, likewise, it was that each monastery had been a seminary of learning, and that these establishments were cherished and venerated by all that was great or virtuous in the land. Nor did education and literature cease in Ireland even in those angry days, when the storm rolled in all its fury, and when society presented the appearance of one tottering, crumbling mass of ruin."

Haverty, in his "History of Ireland," page 107, speaking of the distinguished character of Ireland in the Middle Ages, says:—"Ireland's pre-eminence is no idle dream, no creation of the national imagination; it is as much a reality as any other fact in the range of history; and may be assuredly a legitimate source of national pride. During the period which extended from the inroads of the barbarians in Europe in the sixth century, to the partial revival of education and mental energy under Charlemagne in the ninth, this island was unquestionably the retreat and nursery of learning and piety, and the centre of intellectual activity."

Marianus Scotus, an ancient writer, says in his Chronicles, A.D. 674: "*Ireland was full of Saints.*"

Ven. Bede, in his "Eccles. Hist." Book III. chap. iii., says that at this period "*numbers* were coming from *Ireland* into *Britain*, preaching the Word of God with great devotion."

Eric, a French writer of the ninth century, in his letter to Charles the Bald, says:—"What shall I say of *Ireland*, which, despising the dangers of the deep, is migrating with almost her *whole train of philosophers* to our coasts."

Thierry, in his "History of the Conquest of England," Book X, after describing the poetry and literature of Ireland in the same period, as being the most cultivated of all Western Europe, adds that Ireland "counted a *host of Saints* and *learned men*, venerated in England and in Gaul, for *no country* had furnished more Christian missionaries, uninfluenced by other motives than pure zeal to communicate to other nations the faith of their own land."

Stephen White, in his "*Apologia*," page 24, speaking of the labours of Irish Saints on the Continent, sums up thus:—"Among the names of the Saints whom Ireland formerly sent forth, there were, as I have learned from the trustworthy writings of the Ancients, 150 now honoured as patrons of places in Germany, of whom 36 were martyrs; 45 Irish patrons in France, of whom 6 were martyrs; at least 30 in Belgium; 44 in England; 13 in Italy; and in Iceland and Norway 8 martyrs."

It has been calculated that the ancient *Irish monks* had 13 monastic foundations in Scotland, 12 in England, 7 in France, 12 in Armorica, 7 in Lotharingia, 11 in Burgundy, 9 in Belgium, 10 in Alsatia, 16 in Bavaria, 6 in Italy, 15 in Rhetia, Helvetia, Suevia, besides *many others* in Thuringia, and on the left margin of the Rhine.

The Irish nation has ever been noted for zeal in spreading the knowledge of God: witness this in every page of

ecclesiastical history. St. Cataldus, the Apostle of Tarentum, near Naples, was an Irishman ; St. Sedulius, famous for his fourteen books of Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul, was an Irishman ; St. Fridolin, who founded religious houses in Alsace, Strasbourg, and Switzerland, and is interred on an island in the Rhine, in a monastery built by himself, was an Irishman ; St. Columbus, the founder of the celebrated Monastery of Bobbio, near Milan, was an Irishman ; St. Gall, patron of the Monastery of St. Gall, near Lake Constance, famous at the present time for its learned and holy monks, was an Irishman ; St. Fiacre, the patron saint of many churches in the diocese of Meaux, and different parts of Picardy, and whose relics are the objects of pious pilgrimages to the present time, was an Irishman ; St. Ardent, who preached the Gospel to the Northumbrians in England, and first Bishop of the See of Lindisfarne, was an Irishman ; St. Colman, who preached the Gospel to the Northern Saxons, was an Irishman ; St. Fursey, especially invoked in chapels built by him near Paris, was an Irishman ; St. Arbogast, Bishop of Strasbourg, buried on Mount Michael, where there was a monastery dedicated under his patronage, was an Irishman ; St. Maildolphus, who established the famous school of Inglebome, now Malmesbury, was an Irishman ; St. Cuthbert, son of an Irish prince of Kells, in Meath, Bishop of Lindisfarne, and now invoked as an English saint, was an Irishman ; St. Killian, too, the Apostle of Franconia, and first Bishop of Wurtzburg, was an Irishman. He gained the crown of martyrdom, like St. John the Baptist, having reproached the incestuous adulteress Geilana. St. Findin, Abbot of Richew, near the Rhine, was an Irishman ; St. Virgilius, Bishop of Fiesole, preacher of the Gospel to the Etrurians, was an Irishman ; St. Bu



and St. Ernulphus, who carried the Gospel to Iceland, and founded a church under the patronage of St. Columba, in the city of Esinberg, were Irishmen. I might quote the names of celebrated missionaries from Ireland to a far greater length ; but I have given sufficient.

These few authorities relating to the religious history of Ireland I have taken at random from a mountain pile. It would, it is said, be difficult to write a faithful history of any country in Europe without associating with it the name of Ireland ; such is the widespread influence that Ireland and the Irish have exercised in the moral and the intellectual world. In fact, when Ireland was pagan she was comparatively moral. The excesses for which other pagan countries have been remarkable were not practised by Ireland. This is acknowledged by all those historians who have treated of her early history. When the first ray of Christianity beamed upon her, she arose from the grave of paganism, flung off the winding-sheet of her former superstitions, and standing in the presence of the true God, exclaimed—" Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" In the hands of the Almighty she became a vessel of election to carry his name before the princes and judges of the earth. When clouds of moral darkness enveloped the world in the Middle Ages, when intellect was all but smothered in the smoke of universal battle, when the moral turpitude of society, settling in foetid pools, defiled the religious atmosphere of other lands, Erin was, as Camden remarks in his description of Ireland, " The general mart of learning ;" or, as Dr. Johnson says, " The School of the West, the peaceful habitation of sanctity and learning."

In subsequent days a grand testimony of Ireland's fidelity was demanded by heaven, and so nobly did she give



it as to excite the admiration of angels and of men. We have but to glance at the history of Ireland for the past three hundred years, and our hearts must melt with compassion if they are not of stone ; our feelings must swell into indignation and astonishment if they are not blunted to the last degree ; into indignation, at seeing a people of nobility and intellect deprived of every earthly possession, and mangled solely for attachment to their religion ; and into astonishment, to find Ireland almost tamely submitting to a trial capable of arousing into violent action the deadliest revenge of human nature. But Ireland suffered for her faith. She was called upon by an erring sister to abandon her ancient religion, which she loved, and to embrace a new religion which she abhorred ; the alternative of apostasy or death was proposed to her. Faithful to her first love, to her true Spouse, she preferred martyrdom, and therefore she was led to the rack and to the scaffold ; the blood of her children saturated the soil, so that the moistened earth oozed at every footstep with the gore of her sons. She opened her veins to the incisions of the executioner's knife until the purple streams ran over the nation. She gave up her goods, her blood, her life ; but, her faith,—never ! never !! never !!!

Persons unacquainted with Ireland, and with Ireland's history, are wont to look upon the Irish with something bordering on contempt. The Irish are viewed as if they were destined by nature to be what, in reality, persecution alone had made them—"Hewers of wood and drawers of water." Numbers of old Irish men and women are found who can neither read nor write, and hence unintelligent and prejudiced persons are accustomed to call the Irish the *ignorant Irish* ; but such people should be informed that when massacre was of no avail ; when the rope with which

the Irish were hanged snapped in two from over-use ; when the hangman fainted from exhaustion ; when the block, covered with clotted blood, was cloven asunder from perpetual blows ; when the blunted axe had worn out its steel and would no longer suffer to be whetted ; when even wretches hired to carry out bloody decrees became nauseated with murder and carnage ; when the living remnant of the Irish dwelt in the caverns of the earth ; when, according to the historian Cox, "little could be seen to govern besides carcasses and ashes," then a truce was granted, the nation gathered strength ; but lo ! laws were passed making it a capital offence for any man to educate a Catholic, or for a Catholic parent even to educate his own children ! Schools for Catholics there were none !! teachers there were none !!! The schools were burned ! the teachers had been hanged or transported !! and no education would be given to a Catholic unless he renounced his faith !!! The Irish people *loved education*, but hated *apostasy*, and HENCE they were robbed of education, but kept their faith. So, also, many charge the Irish Catholics with *poverty*, as if poverty argued crime, or as though poverty and meanness were synonymous. Still the slang accusation of poverty is again and again flung in the teeth of Irish Catholics, and we stand charged before mankind as a nation of beggars. What is our answer ? True, the Irish are poor, but who made them so ? Did not penal laws rob them of their possessions, and render it *unlawful* for a *Catholic* to *possess property* ? Even a *house* was forbidden a *Catholic* ; at the point of the bayonet they were driven from their homes, and their earthly treasures were handed to aliens. THUS the lawful lords of the soil are inheritors of poverty. They might be rich if their forefathers had apostatised : they are poor and despised on

earth ; but their reward is eternal, which a just Judge will give them.

Let it not be supposed that I am inclined to make national wealth, comfort, and education the *criteria* of religious truth ; such reasoning would canonise Pharaoh and consign the Israelites to perdition, for he was rich and they were poor. The gods of Assyria and Babylon should then take the place of the God of Judea, for his children were slaves to theirs. And for three hundred years and more, Jesus Christ should be denied on that principle, for his followers flew from city to city, pursued, scourged and sacrificed, while the worshippers of Venus and Jupiter sat down in their marble halls, or luxuriated amid the perfumes of their baths of alabaster, intoxicated with the pride and name which robbed and ruled the universe.

It has been frequently stated by strangers to Ireland's melancholy history that the statement of her trials and endurance has been exaggerated ; but you see that I am now quoting history after history, and giving, in addition, names of authors, with the titles of their works, and the pages at which the extracts are to be found ; add to this the fact, that many of these historians are neither Catholics nor Irishmen, and you can better realise the startling truths put forth.

Persons acquainted with the early history of Christianity know that from the year 64 of the Christian era, when Nero, that monster in human form, who caused the Christians to be covered with tar and made burning piles of for the amusement of the Roman populace, down to 313, when Diocletian and his three colleagues were raging like four wild beasts against the religion of Christ, eleven Roman emperors, in succession, unsheathed the sword of persecution, and kept it, dripping with human blood, for

250 years over the Catholic Church ; yet the Four Masters in their Annals, A.D. 1537, comparing the persecutions of the early Christians with that of the Catholics of Ireland under Elizabeth, do not hesitate to affirm that, " Although great was the persecution of the Roman Emperors against the Church, it is not probable that so great a persecution as this (the persecution of the Irish) ever came upon the world." And we find Morrison, in his "*Threnodia*," p. 14, stating, that " Neither the Israelites were more cruelly persecuted by King Pharaoh, nor the innocent infants by Herod, nor the Christians by Nero, nor any other of the pagan tyrants, than were the Roman Catholics of Ireland by their oppressors." And in the history of the Jesuit missions in Ireland, up to 1635, the following sad picture is drawn: " The enemy, having obtained possession of the entire kingdom, raged with such fury that the Turks or the demons from hell could not display greater ferocity."

Burke, in vol. i., page 560 of his works, speaking of the atrocious laws enacted under Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, to force the Irish to abandon the Catholic religion, says: " It was a machine of wise and elaborate construction, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of the people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man."

Dr. Smiles, in the Preface to his " History of Ireland," thus refers to the persecution of the Irish Catholics:—" The records of religious persecutions in all countries have nothing more hideous to offer to our notice than the persecution of the Irish Catholics. On them all the devices of cruelty were executed. Ingenuity was taxed to devise new plans of persecution, till the machinery of penal iniquity might almost be pronounced perfect."



Lester, in his "Fate and Condition of England," vol. ii., page 83, writes of Ireland :—"That injured country was the great repast at which every monarch bade his lords sit down to eat. After they had gorged their fill the remains were left for those who should come after. Tranquillity succeeded these massacres, but it was the tranquillity of the graveyard."

De Burgo, page 77 of "Hib. Don.," writes thus :—"The Israelites in Egypt could cry to Pharaoh in their oppression ; yet this was not granted to the Irish. If the former were oppressed they had, however, the flesh-pots and abundance of food. The Irish, whilst enduring a worse than Egyptian slavery, are exterminated by famine and the sword."

Dominick de Rosario, in his "History of the Geraldines," to which I have already made allusion, addressing his Catholic countrymen, says at page 138 :—"Your religion made your enemies crucify you. Divesting themselves of humanity, and disregarding God's anger, the rage of these persecutors exhausted itself on our holy edifices. The priests of the Lord were stoned in the public thoroughfares, and their tonsured heads were made targets for the wretches to aim at. Some of these priests had their brains beaten out, their bodies dashed to the earth, trodden under foot, and bruised by kicks and blows ; some had the nails of their fingers torn out by the roots, whilst others actually saw their entrails protrude, and the flesh ripped up and torn by combs of iron."

"O'Connell's Memoir," page 346, quotes the following language from a publication issued against the Catholics in the days of the penal enactments :—"Cursed be he that holdeth back his sword from blood ; yea, cursed be he that maketh not his sword stark drunk with Irish blood—that



maketh them not heaps upon heaps, and their country a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment to nations."

The following testimony could not be credited, but that the authority is indisputable:—"In the *Commons Journals* of 1644 (vol. iii., page 517), it is recorded that Captain Swanley having captured a vessel at sea, and thrown seventy individuals overboard BECAUSE THEY WERE IRISH, he was summoned to the bar of the House of Commons, and had thanks there given him for his good service, and a chain of gold of £200 value ! ! ! Lord Clarendon (ii. 478), writes that this was not an exceptional case ; but on the contrary, with officers of the navy, "it was a rule, whenever they made Irish prisoners to bind them back to back and cast them overboard ! ! !"

Brethren, I confess that in the study and in the recital of the sufferings of Ireland, my entire nature is agitated, my soul droops in sorrow. How, indeed, can an Irishman, a Catholic, a Christian, yea, even a man, glance at this crimsoned period of Irish history, and see the Irish people suffer so much for God, and not exclaim : "Well done, good and faithful servants of the Lord of Hosts!" It is true that the day of terrible persecution is past ; but it does not follow that we should forget the noble endurance of our fathers. If anyone were to reply to me, "Let bygones be bygones," I answer : "I look not in the spirit of anger or revenge, but of pride, upon what my ancestors have undergone ; I forget who it was that inflicted the wound, I remember only that it was patiently endured. I can with difficulty perceive that the history of the wrongs of Ireland, Catholic Ireland, can be distasteful to any impartial scholar."

Thus far I have attempted a description of those harrowing scenes of Irish butchery. We have looked with

wonder and pity at a noble people, standing naked, starving, dripping with blood, and holding, nevertheless, the prize they fought for—their religion untouched. If, however, anyone before me considers that I have been complaining, he is in error. I have desired to place before you, first the life of Ireland's Apostle, St. Patrick ; this I have done ; and, secondly, I desired to demonstrate that his fruit has remained ; and this I am doing. I have watched you from the moment I began to speak even till now, and I will venture to say that the absolute silence, the fixed gaze of my auditory have emboldened me to proceed. I thought I saw sparks of patriotic fire flash from your eyes, whilst the countenances of all have given unmistakable signs of approbation and encouragement ; however I shall say no more of Ireland's persecution. The year 1829 came and swept the penal laws from the statute book ; and subsequently the nation gradually recovered. For a while all went well ; the Catholics were allowed the distinguished privilege of WHELPS that eat the CRUMBS from the rich man's table ; they had some respite ; but the God of wisdom and love, who would still purify and glorify Ireland, received a further testimony from poor Erin : I refer to later times, from 1846 to 1856, a period within our own remembrance.

Ireland passed through a bitter ordeal. Famine and pestilence visited the people, scarcely yet recovered from the effects of the merciless penal laws. But recently the Catholics of Ireland had been permitted to worship God according to their consciences. Churches were suffered to be erected in back lanes, and the religion of Catholics was tolerated. Those whose fathers had been robbed of their wealth and position were now graciously allowed to act as constables, messengers, and menials ; even thus they were

beginning to revive and assume a status in society when dire famine, with rueful pestilence, swept over the land. The people were now stricken by a new scourge, the consequences of which could easily have been averted—“*sed præstat componere fluctus.*” Again an effort was made to rob them of their faith. Relief was in abundance—in Scripture societies and in soup kitchens, it could be obtained by those who would give up priests and Mass—this was the cant expression—or who would suffer their little ones to attend non-Catholic schools. But, as usual, the people were firm ; food and clothing were offered to them and to their children if they would barter their faith ; but, despising the bribe, crowds of Catholics died from starvation in the presence of relentless rulers and mockers of the Good Samaritan.

In those days of poverty renewed efforts were made to deprive the Irish of their faith. It was thought that the descendants of those who despised martyrdom by open violence would succumb to hunger and pestilence ; hence, societies were formed with a view of inducing the famine-stricken children of the Irish nation to exchange their religion for worldly gain. Famishing creatures were tempted with bread, meat, soup, clothing and money, to barter the Church which their forefathers clung to in days of dire oppression. The bait was rejected, and the Catholics of Ireland, faithful to God under every misfortune, preferred death in any shape to apostasy.

Myles O'Reilly, in his “Sufferers for the Catholic Faith in Ireland,” thus speaks :—“For one hundred years more (until 1829) did Irish Catholics submit to the privation of every worldly advantage rather than abandon their faith, accounting all things as dross that they might gain Christ.” Nay, even at a later date, when, in 1847, famine and pesti-

lence smote the land—when our skin was burnt as in an oven by reason of the violence of the famine—when the tongue of the suckling child stuck to the roof of its mouth from thirst—when the little ones asked for bread and there was none to break to them, and they breathed out their souls on the breasts of their mothers, when it might be truly said, “It was better with them that were slain by the sword than with them that died with hunger ;” and when the generous people of England, of France, of Italy, and of every other Christian land sent abundant alms to our famishing people, there were found, in some districts of Ireland, men base enough to use hunger as an instrument of torture to make the poor forswear their religion, who offered food and clothing as the price of apostasy, and tempted our starving peasants to barter, like Esau, their birthright of faith for a mess of pottage. And there were found thousands—old men and weak women and tender children, whose names, unrecorded here, are registered in heaven—who spurned the temptation, as their ancestors had done before them ; turned fainting from the food that was the wages of sin, and purchased an eternal kingdom by death from hunger, imitating him who “chose rather to be afflicted with the people of God than to have the pleasure of sin for a time,” because, like him, “they looked to the reward.” And others, there were, who, when the representatives of that alien Church, which for three centuries had sought in vain to bring them under its dominion, required of them either to send their children to the school of error, or to abandon the occupation of the land in which they lived, hesitated not, but left home and country, and all that made life dear, and became dwellers in a strange land.

It is not necessary to quote more on this subject. It is



heavy, dull, gloomy work to keep one's eye continually upon a picture of such dismal and melancholy colouring. I should have tried to enliven the scene; but I deem it an unworthy thing to laugh with those that weep, to be joyful and gay in the presence of grief and mourning, I will nevertheless endeavour, in concluding, to clothe the subject with greater interest, by citing a few examples illustrating the misery, and yet the constancy, of the Irish Catholics in the late years of famine.

During a part of this famine period, when pestilence—the natural follower of poverty—raged, and whilst the soupers or proselytisers sought to sap the faith of the destitute, I was connected with a Society in Dublin, entitled, “The Society of the Queen of Charity,” an institution which did much to alleviate the misery of the poor, and to stem the tide of proselytism. As a visiting member of that society, I met with hundreds of cases of poor persons who preferred starvation, pestilence, and death to the loss of faith. The poverty was great, and the pestilence was like a scythe mowing down the poor victims of famine. Even in the metropolis (Dublin) whole families succumbed to the harbingers of death. In the country parts crowds sickened and died; soup kitchens and clothes-marts were opened everywhere to entice the shivering, perishing creatures to exchange religion for pelf. I remember one peculiar case of poverty and fidelity, which I shall relate to you. In a place called Cole Alley, off Meath Street, in Dublin, there dwelt a widowed mother and four orphans. I was deputed by “The Society of the Queen of Charity” to visit them and report upon their case, with many other cases. When I entered her wretched habitation she and her ghastly children were sitting together partaking of what appeared to be meat. Her statement was simple and



unsophisticated. She had resided in Limerick. Her husband had been gate-keeper at a mansion. He, poor fellow, died from fever, leaving his wife and four children nearly destitute. He had saved, indeed, a little money, which he left to his bereaved family. The husband was scarcely dead when it was proposed to the poor widow to give up her POPISH notions, and that then she might live *well* and be happy. (?) Poor, but noble-minded creature! With a heart scalded with sorrow by the death of her husband, and the insult to her faith, she turned away, saying, "No, ma'am; I will go to Dublin with my children, live with my sister, and remain a Catholic." She travelled on foot to Dublin with her four children; but, lo! when she arrived, an additional trial awaited her; her sister was dead and buried. Plunged deeper into misery, she hired a wretched hovel in a back-yard, where she and her fatherless children were huddled together without furniture, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, where the pitiless cold sleet pelted in through the broken windows of her wretched habitation. In a very short time her little money was exhausted, and reduced, among strangers, to bitter, bitter hunger, she and her four children were, on the day when I visited them, in a corner, feasting upon the carcase of a pig which had died from disease, and which one of the orphans had succeeded in taking out of a pit! Tell me, brethren, as you have hearts of flesh; answer me, mothers, as you love your little ones, was not that poor woman, with her four infants, a martyr to her religion and her God?

I scarcely know, brethren, whether I should trifle further with your feelings or tamper with my own. I feel my heart ready to burst asunder with pity, and I see on many an eye the glistening tears of commiseration. Well,

no marvel. Poor Ireland! she has deserved well; may God bless her!

In the days of famine, a column of the daily papers was commonly set apart for "Deaths from starvation." A case was related to me of another poor widow who had two children—the one an infant, the other a boy of ten years. She had struggled for days to support existence on roots, but poor human nature yielded—the boy died; her neighbours (it was in a country place) were dead or gone. How was she to bury her son? There was no coffin, no sheet. What! O God of compassion! O angels of heaven!! She, the weak, tottering mother, went forth carrying the body of the boy tied upon her shoulders, that she might cast it into a decent grave. On the way she fell from exhaustion, and yielded her soul to God. When found, the babe, still living, was eating the breast of the dead mother, while the body of the dead boy lay putrid beside her!! O homage to virtue! O sacrifice to truth! O deep, deep love of faith! Hail! bodies of the illustrious dead, that have co-operated with the spirit in "despising the things that are below, and preferring the things that are above."

Permit me to relate another anecdote, which demonstrates the undying tenacity of the Irish to their faith. It is stated that in the diocese of Tuam, when the poverty was keenly felt, there stood in a poor country parish a Catholic church. The people were there too poor to give proper support to their priest, so that he, too, shared, to some extent, in the famine. One morning, he went early, as was his custom, to celebrate Mass. It was a dark, rainy, cold, winter morning; everything in nature was bleak and dreary. Before Mass, a poor man presented himself for confession, and afterwards received Holy Communion.

When the priest had ended his prayers of thanksgiving, he proceeded to lock the door of the church, but in a corner he discovered the old man who had communicated lying upon the floor. The priest aroused him, and asked him why he lay there. His simple but magnificent reply was: "Father, I am dying of hunger. For three days I have eaten nothing but weeds, but still I am happy. This morning I came to confession and have received Holy Communion as a preparation for death. I wish, Father, to die in God's holy house. I am now too far gone to recover, but having received the Holy Sacrament, I will be delighted to expire at any moment God wishes." Splendid confidence! noble faith!! It would be a pity, O Christian soul, magnanimous martyr, to stop thee on thy way to heaven!

You will remember, brethren, that no one was exposed to death, or even to privation of any kind, who wished to apostatise; for every enticement was held out as a reward to those who were willing to forego their religion; but none were found. To God be eternal thanks!

I will now close with one more relation. It is stated that in a certain cabin there dwelt an old man of eighty years, his wife nearly the same age. They had one son, who tried to provide food to sustain his aged parents, and so neglected himself that he died from starvation. The old man of eighty dragged the body of his dead child outside the door to bury it, coffinless, while the old woman lay perishing on the floor within. As the father tried to dig the grave, an emissary from a proselytising society accosted him, saying: "How foolish to have allowed your son to die for want, while we would have relieved your distress if you had merely given up your *Romanism*." The poor old woman, upon hearing this wicked saying, cried

out to the aged partner of her life : “ Larry, acushla, come in ;—here we have been married, here our children were born and baptised ; we are Catholics, and we will die so. Come in and lie down on this bed of straw.” The old man went in, lay down, and instantly both man and wife expired—martyrs, decidedly, to the Catholic faith !

One more instance, and I close : it is one related to me by a mother, to whom the incident happened. In the year of deepest distress in Ireland, when souper’s schools were in all directions, and every effort was made to swell the ranks of Protestantism, by enticing starving widows to send their perishing children to schools for bread and soup, there resided in a lane off Beresford Steet, in Dublin, a poor widow named Kelly, with her one orphan boy, by name John, aged about seven years. She struggled, in spite of failing health, to support herself and her sweet little child for a long time ; but one day it happened that she had no work and no food, not a morsel. She asked for a bit of bread from several persons for her little boy John, but she could get none. Night came on, and she lay down on her straw bed in a corner with a sorrowful heart ; her child lay beside her. There was no furniture in the room except the straw bed, two cups, an old basin, and a little statue of the Holy Virgin on the wall. Before trying to compose herself to sleep, she said to her hungry child : “ Johnny, my love, you are hungry, so am I. Do not cry, my little pet ;” and as she spoke she kissed him with her parched lips, and said, “ I can bear this no longer ; to-morrow you must go to the Protestant school in Linenhall Street, where you will get bread, and poor mother will try elsewhere. I cannot help it.” As she spoke, she would fain have wept, but she could not ; her sorrow was too deep ; her whole nature was dried up. But

poor little John said: "Mother, don't you recollect that when my father was dying he said I must not go to the Protestant school? I must live a Catholic, and be a good boy. Kiss me again, mother. God will give me bread to-morrow!" The poor woman was unable to answer a word; her heart was bursting with grief, and she fell asleep through sheer exhaustion. After an hour she awoke, and, missing her boy from her side, she became alarmed. She looked around; it was a moonlight night, though cloudy, and she saw with astonishment her dear little boy kneeling before the statue of the Holy Virgin. She dared not speak; she listened, and heard him say, "Holy Mary, my mother says I must go to the Protestant school to-morrow to get bread. I do not wish to go there. Will you ask Jesus to bring me to heaven?" Thus his simple prayer ended, and immediately he sank upon the floor. The mother sprang from her pallet, ran to the spot and clasped her child in her arms. But he was dead! Dear child, with an innate hereditary love of faith, he had passed to heaven!!!

I have done, brethren. I thank you for your kind attention: my love for my poor country fills my very soul to overflowing. The more I think and speak of Ireland the more I love her.

"Remember thee? Yes, while there's life in this heart,  
It shall never forget thee, all lorn as thou art;  
More dear in thy sorrow, thy gloom, and thy showers,  
Than the rest of the world in their sunniest hours.

"Wert thou all that I wish thee, great, glorious, and free,  
First flower of the earth, and first gem of the sea,  
I might hail thee with prouder, with happier brow;—  
But, oh! could I love thee more deeply than now?

"No; thy chains as they rankle, thy blood as it runs,  
But make thee more painfully dear to thy sons,  
Whose hearts, like the young of the desert-bird's nest,  
Drink love in each life-drop that flows from thy breast."



